



CONFLICT MITIGATION

Kosovo Serb Participation High in "Week of Culture"

Twenty-eight activities, from theater performances to chess tournaments, attracted over 1,500 people in five Kosovo Serb communities during the June 2-6 "Week of Culture."

Events covered a range of cultural and sports activities, designed to offer residents, especially youth, positive opportunities to engage in community life and demonstrate vibrancy in Kosovo Serb communities.

A traditional crafts and food presentation including a fashion show, a handicraft exhibition and food tasting organized by the NGO Avenija from Llapleselle/Laplje Selo was a well-attended event in Graçanice/Gracanica. Over 100 participants watched ten young women model outfits incorporating traditional Serbian patterns, viewed a hands-on crafts exhibition and sampled approximately 30 traditional Serbian dishes. The mood was fun and festive.

"Finally there is something happening in our community and it is not politics," happily commented a young participant at this event.



Handicraft exhibition - NGO Avenija, one of the 28 different events held during the Week of Culture.

A comedy theater production held in Gornja Gusterica by Ghetto Theater attracted a standing-room only audience of over 300 people and provided the community with an opportunity to come together and laugh.

In Ropotovo, a folklore competition brought most of the community to the Cultural House with more than 200

people watching the singing and dancing groups compete for a place in the final folklore competition held on Friday evening, June 6, in Graçanice/Gracanica.

A modern dance competition for youth dance groups was like "Euro Fest, right here," said one audience member, and allowed for an excited and friendly competitive spirit to prevail among participants and an audience of almost 400 who crowded into the Cultural House. Various sport competitions including table tennis, basketball, volleyball, chess and cycling have attracted between 20 and 100 participants at each event, and up to 200 spectators each in Graçanice/Gracanica and Shterpce/Sterpce. Media coverage of these events by Serbian language outlets in Kosovo and Belgrade based media has been extensive.

The activities were organized by seven NGOs, Avenija, Communication for Social Development (CSD), Center for Peace and Tolerance (CPT), Future without Fear (FWF), Ghetto Theater, Link Production, and Organization for People with Disabilities (OON). The Week of Culture is part of USAID's Support to Peace and Stability project, implemented by the Academy for Educational Development.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Quarry Operators Win Royalty Payment Correction, Re-Gain Competitive Advantage

An irregularity that charged quarry operators twice was resolved as a result of USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support (KCBS) project's efforts to establish a fair system for paying royalties on construction materials.

In the last three years, quarry operators were charged with double payments for construction material quarried from lands owned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development (and through extension, by the Kosovo Forest Agency or KFA). This double payment meant that quarry operators paid one payment to municipalities and a second payment to the KFA, while the law required only one payment. This irregular double payment was handicapping Kosovo's quarry operators and reducing their competitiveness.

USAID's KCBS project helped resolve the issue, culminating in the May signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

The benefits of this clarification of royalty payments will be felt in the 2008 construction season. As a result of this agreement, ten local quarrying companies have been relieved of over 200,000Euros of incorrectly levied double royalty payments on past quarrying, and will make commensurate savings on their future activities.

The Kosovo Cluster and Business Support Project is a four-year activity to stimulate economic growth in three different business clusters, livestock (covering dairy, meat, animal feed, and poultry), fruits and vegetables, and construction materials. KCBS project is implemented by Chemonics International.

Kosovo Celebrates World Milk Day

For the first time, Kosovo celebrated World Milk Day this June 1 in Pristina's Germia Park. The celebration promotes milk and the milk industry, especially reaching out to young people with nutrition messages about milk. Children from primary schools from Pristina and Mitrovica came to Germia Park for games such as a Q & A competition on the dairy industry and free giveaways, and left with a better understanding of the importance of milk in their diet and a free T-shirt.



USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support distributed 300 T-shirts to the children answering a dairy question.

The event was organized by USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support project in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Kosovo Association of Milk Producers (KAMP), and Kosovo Dairy Processing Association (KDPA). Four dairy processors gave away free yogurt and cheese, while KDPA and MAFRD handed out brochures about the dairy industry to the people at the park.

It is expected that this symbolic event will become a traditional one, providing an opportunity to focus the public attention on local dairy products and publicize activities connected with milk and the milk industry.

RULE OF LAW

Management Information System Provided to Prosecution Office

The Gjilan/Gnjilane Prosecution Office gained new equipment on May 29 to enable its use of the computer-based "Case Management Information System" in this district. The Gjilan/Gnjilane Prosecution Case Management Information System is a pilot project, an initiative of the Prosecution Case Management Working Group which includes Kosovo prosecutors, justice sector information technology (IT) personnel, representatives of the Ministry of Justice, and other key stakeholders.

"I am confident that the project will result in improvements to the prosecution system, as well as to the overall Kosovo justice system," said Susan Fritz, USAID Deputy Director at the ceremony marking the start of the pilot project. "We recognize that the reform process will take time and sustained commitment and effort of all involved. Today, USAID reconfirms its continued support and commitment to working closely with the Kosovo Government and international stakeholders to support the justice system in Kosovo." Fritz was joined by Arsim Janova, Deputy Minister of Justice, at the ceremony.

USAID supported this initiative by providing hardware to the Gjilan/Gnjilane District Prosecution Office, including desktop computers for prosecutors and staff, computer monitors, and multi-purpose printers and scanners. USAID is working to help establish a sustainable, effective and independent judiciary in Kosovo. USAID's Justice Support Program aims to increase the public's trust in Kosovo's judiciary through an array of activities that focus on building a strong, independent, yet accountable justice system. Kosovo Justice Support Program is implemented by the National Center for State Courts.

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